

## THE MANY FACES OF GOD: ASTROTHEOLOGY OF THE BIBLE

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### ABSTRACT

Angels, as mythical beings, appear and disappear suddenly throughout biblical texts, without any clear explanation of their origins or metaphysical ranks. Whether they are considered circumstantial theophanies or entities with granted self-existence and specific divine functions; such metaphysical entities have a vital presence in the religious beliefs and practices of millions of people. This work will provide an outlook that will explain the nature of those beings as ontological principles that evolved from pagan backgrounds, now known by us as archetypes or spiritual entities. By exploring the religious ideas of the ancient world, we can find a divergent approach to the henotheism found in biblical texts. This paper will bring forth new essential perspectives to the readers in interpreting some primordial religious symbols and concepts in The Bible, considering their sources from pre-canonical religious backgrounds, meaning paganism. It will discuss the origins of the angels from astral ancient cults, pointing out intra-biblical evidence of how henotheism was structured by astrology. Those Canaanites beliefs shaped gradually all the stages of the ancient Israelite religion revealed in the biblical texts, and were encrypted in the names of places, epithets, biblical characters features, animals, etc.

#### Keywords:

Astrotheology, Biblical Sciences, Religious Studies, Angels & Demons, Astral Cults, Myths

### BIBLICAL HENOTHEISM AND ASTROTHEOLOGY ON THE SUPREME GOD

In the first chapters of the Book of Job, there can be found a fascinating religious idea: "And the day was, and came the children of the god(s) to report Yahweh, and also came the satan among them" *ויהי היום ויבאו בני האלים להתיצב על-יהוה ויבוא גם-השט בתוכם*<sup>1</sup>"

This interesting outlook regarding the primordial worldview conveyed by the above biblical text, presents evidence of a long-term and undeniable henotheistic tradition that preceded Jewish monotheism and prevailed among the peoples of the Mediterranean Levant. Henotheism is understood as the worship of a supreme deity, the top of a divine hierarchy without denying the possibility of other deities. The subordinate deities within the hierarchy, were recognised as separate aspects of that superior root, from which they emanated to conform to the various aspects of the cosmos.<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, astrotheology is the study of the worship of the celestial bodies as deities. In anthropological literature, these practices are referred to as astral cults. The first Astrotheological work was published in 1714 by William Derham<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Job chapter 1 verse 6 and chapter 2 verse 1. Self translation from Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>2</sup> C.Taliaferro; V. S. Harrison; Stewart Goetz (2012). The Routledge Companion to Theism. Routledge. pp. 78-79

<sup>3</sup> Derham, William (1714). Astro-theology: or, A demonstration of the being and attributes of God, from a survey of the heavens. W. and J. Innys.

Closer look at the biblical texts reveals that the supreme deity manifested himself in two different moments and aspects. Firstly, unto an Amorite from Uruk called Abraham, who worshiped an Ugaritic deity named by epithets such as EL-Elyon<sup>4</sup> and EL-Shadday<sup>5</sup>. Through this manifestation, it is suggested a bond among the peoples inhabiting the areas towards the north-east: the Israelite kingdom of the north, Ugaritians, Arameans and Amorites. Secondly, the deity re-appeared 400 years later. This time, the manifestation was related to the Midianites<sup>6</sup> and Edomites<sup>7</sup> under the name of Yahweh. In the Book of Exodus, it is mentioned that Yahweh Elohim's day of worship is the Saturday or Shabat. It is well-known that the Hebrew word Shabat שַׁבָּת is linked with the concept of Saturn which is Shabbetai שַׁבְּתַאי. Greek and Arab astrologers, however, considered Saturn to be the most dangerous among the seven planets. So, the Jews, astrologically governed by Saturn, were considered to be stained by the planet's wicked nature<sup>8</sup>. According to Raphael Patai, the hypothesis of Dr. Roy A Rosenberg with regard to the question of what planet was associated to the Isralite's God, his view becomes more congruent if Yahweh is associated with Tzdedeq as Jupiter while the Ugaritic God EL could be associated with Saturn (if his divine attributes can be equivalent with Cronos)<sup>9</sup>

However, the deity native to the northern state-cities of Canaan (in anti-Lebanon's region and Ugarit) and the deity that belonged to the nomadic peoples of the south, merged into the One God somehow. The Bible introduces the sincretic notion of a supreme divine power held by different divine names and often, sharing the same religious symbols and calling humans to obey the same moral laws. Moreover, both have divine agents called angels or messengers, that are considered theophanies or supernatural manifestations of the supreme deity. This syncretism between Yahweh (Yah) and EL, spread out quicker over the Mediterranean Levant during agitated times, when new geo-political scenarios started at the end of the Bronze Age.

After the strike of the People from the Sea mostly against Ugarites and Hittites, the survivors had to flee towards the valleys and mounts of Canaan. Sharing similar cults, those groups of survivors accepted the assimilation of the Phoenician alphabet to their languages, as well as the judicial norms, by letting non-royal magistrates known as shofet (Punic: šūfet) to act as judges for civil and political affairs.

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<sup>4</sup> Gen 14:18-19 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>5</sup> Gen 17:1 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>6</sup> Ex 22:2 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>7</sup> Judges 5:4 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>8</sup> Shlomo Sela (2004) "Abraham Ibn Ezra's Appropriation of Saturn," Kabbalah 10 pp 21–53.

<sup>9</sup> Patai, R. (1973). The God Yahweh-Elohim. American Anthropologist, 75(4), 1181–1184.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/673271>

This civil leadership was formed by these magistrates, called by the same name in Hebrew (heb. שופט shofet). The Phoenician tradition of shoftim from within the lands of Canaan, is transmitted by the Book of Shoftim (Judges)<sup>10</sup> Eventually though, the respective groups began to compete against each other in pursuit of a political hegemony. This social organization sheds some light upon the similarities of beliefs and life-styles among all the Canaanites. In the Book of Judges, we will find out how the Phoenician religion manages to get into Israelite society. Phoenicians considered themselves Canaanites and probably Israelites were a built alter-ego of the Canaanites, but this assumption can not be proven. What we are able to confirm is that religion and state were entangled for the Phoenicians. Their henotheism brought a variety of divine manifestations that shaped our understanding of “*the divine*” from a philosophical view.

## **WORSHIPING OF VENUS AMONG ANCIENT ISRAELITES.**

One of the more complex examples, can be found in chapter 4 of the Book of Judges, verses 4 and 5, digging into its cultural and religious background: *"And Deborah, prophetess, woman of the torches, she was judging (heb. שופטת - shofetah) Israel in those times, and she lived under a Tamar (date palm) between Ramah y Bet-El, on the mount of Efraim. And came before the children of Israel to judge them".*

The Hebrew text mentions a woman called Deborah, who was known as שופטת - shofetah, which is the counterpart of θεοφάνη or Phoenician, male magister. Also it is being said that she was a prophetess (heb. נביה nebiah)<sup>11</sup>. Her name comes from the Hebrew word דבר dabar, which means *word*, but also has been translated traditionally as *bee*, meaning that must be pointed out here. Deborah is a woman who transmits knowledge, that announces things to come, and who advises. Additionally, there are elements in this story extracted from the Hebrew language that make it even more enigmatic because she is being described as “*the woman of the torches*”.

Those were religious elements that were forming parts of rituals related to the cult of Artemis<sup>12</sup>. In turn, Artemis was a huntress just like Astarte, goddess of death and animal fertility, also fertility of young women. In Ephesus she was being represented with symbols such as *bee* and date palm<sup>13</sup>. It is thought that the cult of Artemis is the evolution of the cult of Phoenician Astarte<sup>14</sup>. In regards to the date palm, the Book of Judges mentions this prophetess lived under a Tamar or date palm. The archeological evidence of an ostracon found in Kuntillet Ajrud (dated

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<sup>10</sup> J. Alberto (Philadelphia, 1981) Judges, Westminster Press on Carlos G. Wagner (Madrid, 2012): El Sulfato de Anibal pp 251-70

<sup>11</sup> Judges 4:4-5 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>12</sup> Marie Léger (2015, April) Artemis and her cult. A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Pp 239-55

<sup>13</sup> Cartwright, M. (2019, July 24). Artemis. World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/artemis/>

<sup>14</sup> Mark, J. J. (2021, November 09). Astarte. World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/asstarte/>

from 800 B.C.E) shows Asherah depicted as a stylized date palm. There is also a mention in Paleo-Hebrew that says "*the Asherah of Yahweh*". Evidence abounds that this deity was known as Ashirat among the Amorites<sup>15</sup> and there is a connection with the deity Asherah, who is referred to in several biblical texts. Some scholars agree that the writing of the Book of Judges comes from the same VIII century B.C.E.<sup>16</sup> The religious concept of "*the Asherah of Yahweh*", whatever the meaning is, it cannot be discarded, and it is a religious cult of a female deity<sup>17</sup>.

## SYMBOLS OF THE DIVINE FEMININE

The date palm or tamar, is also considered an important religious symbol associated with the goddess Ishtar<sup>18</sup>. The date palm, represents longevity and eternity, fertility and constant regeneration, just like a tree reproduces itself from the buds of its trunk. Those grow under the extreme heat of the sun and survive under the conditions of low humidity. One had an impression that the rays of the sun were fertilizing them. Moreover, the wood and branches offered materials for the constructions of houses and provided food and household useful solutions. It is fair to say that the palm tree of dates was the pillar of society<sup>19</sup>.

The prophetess Deborah represents the divine feminine in the henoteistic context. Whether it was Asherah or Astarte, the purpose was not merely to be an archetype of fertility or femininity but also of astrology. The Hebrew Bible, due to its symbolism, assigns to those goddesses the role of Queen of Heavens.

In Ugarit it was the goddess Attart and among the Asirians it was Ishtar. In Mesopotamia it was goddess Inanna and all of them were represented by the planet Venus.<sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> The cult of the planet Venus was so vital as the cult of the Sun. Those heavenly bodies were prominent deities among the people of Mediterranean Levant<sup>22</sup>. The Phoenicians venerated the planet Venus and they had a dedicated priesthood, which can be inferred from the figure of Deborah. Another case of priestesses of Astarte can be found within inscriptions that were discovered in a sarcophagus dated to be from the V century B.C.E of the king Eshmunazor II. The ruler's mother was identified as a *kohenet of Ashtarte*.

<sup>15</sup> Hess, Richard S. "Asherah or Asherata?" *Orientalia*, vol. 65, no. 3, 1996, pp. 209–219. JSTOR

<sup>16</sup> Bacon, Gershon; Sperling, S. David (2007). "Judges (Heb. שופטים), Book of". *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Vol. 11 (2nd ed.). pp. 561–66.

<sup>17</sup> Irit Ziffer, Western Asiatic Tree-Goddesses. Article in Ägypten und Levante · January 2011 pp 420-21

<sup>18</sup> Irit Ziffer, Western Asiatic Tree-Goddesses. Article in Ägypten und Levante · January 2011 pp 419-20

<sup>19</sup> Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery, 1989: Staplefoods : Proceedings. Holly Chase. The Date-Palm: Pillar of Society pp 61-69

<sup>20</sup> Lipiński, Edward (1995). Gods and Goddesses of the Phoenician and Punic Universe]. *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta* (in French). Vol. 64. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press.

<sup>21</sup> Cooley, Jeffrey L. (2008). "Inanna and Šukaletuda: A Sumerian Astral Myth". *KASKAL*. 5: 161–172. ISSN 1971-8608.

<sup>22</sup> N. Campion (2012) Astrology and Cosmology in the world's religions. New York University Press. Chapters 8 & 11

It is inevitable not to make a comparison with the Hebrew *kohen*, meaning *priest*<sup>23</sup>. Henotheism was a phenomenon across all the Mediterranean Levant. Every single culture, venerated specifically a supreme god with his respective female counterpart.

## THE NOTION OF A DIVINE COUNCIL FROM ASTRAL CULTS

A divine hierarchy can be found easily in all those cultures. By comparing some biblical texts with more archeological discoveries, it can be realized that the idea of a *divine council* has been there for a while. For example, a magical amulet from the VII Century B.C.E was discovered in Arslan Tash, Syria in 1939 C.E. The Phoenicians characters were translated by the professor of semitic languages Franz Rosenthal as follows <sup>24</sup>. “*Ashur made a pact with us, All the sons of EL and the great council of all the holy ones*”.

Now, let's compare the previous text with the religious ideas found in the Book of Psalms: “*God takes his stand in the divine council, surrounded by the gods he gives judgment. How much longer will you give unjust judgements and uphold the prestige of the wicked? I had thought, "Are you gods, are all of you sons of Elyon?" No! you will die as human beings do, as one man, princes, you will fall*”. Psalm 82:1-2, 6-7 <sup>25</sup>.

If the common structural beliefs of those cultures are identified, we will find an underlying astrological religion as source of their cosmogonies and theologies. This primordial religion considers that the celestial bodies represented the godly powers that nourished and led all cosmic events <sup>26</sup>. This way, the fate of the ancient kings and the events of the empires they ruled, would be determined by the positioning of the celestial bodies, they were understood as omens from the Gods <sup>27 28</sup>. The sight of the celestial bodies seen throughout the night skies, were believed to be a

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<sup>23</sup> Ackerman, S. (2013). The Mother of Eshmunazor, Priest of Astarte: A Study of her Cultic Role. Die Welt Des Orients, 43(2), 158–178. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23608853>

<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal, Franz (1969). "The Amulet from Arslan Tash". In Pritchard, James (ed.). Trans. in: Ancient Near Eastern Texts (3rd ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 658

<sup>25</sup> Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>26</sup> Cooley, J. L. (2012). Celestial Divination in Ugarit and Ancient Israel: A Reassessment. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 71(1), 21–30. <https://doi.org/10.1086/664456>

<sup>27</sup> <https://brunelleschi.imss.fi.it/galileopalazzostrozzi/object/TabletWithLetterToAssyrianKingEsarhaddon1.html>

<sup>28</sup> Swerdlow, N. (1998). The Babylonian Theory of the Planets. Princeton: Princeton University Press

gathering of the divine council announcing the destinies of the people<sup>29 30 31</sup>. Besides is attested this religious idea of a divine assembly or celestial court in The Fifth Table of Enuma Elish (1200 B.C.E) “When from the Apsu you go up for the Assembly, there will be your night's resting (-place) to receive all of you; When from the heavens you come down from the Assembly, there will be your nights resting (-place) to receive all of you” Landsberger, Wilson (1962)<sup>32</sup>.

Another later and very known example of these astrological beliefs is found in the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. According to the source of the Gospel of Matthew, “some wise men from the east (perhaps from Persia or Babylon) arrived in Israel following the star of the king of the Jews”. That astrological event motivated the delivery of three kinds of gifts, which were symbols of the fate of this king-messiah and his people according to the canonical gospels.<sup>33</sup> The Jewish scholar Roy A. Rosenberg made some research about what planetary conjunction or alignment could be the one referred to in the story of the birth of Jesus Christ in order to establish a bond with the ancient Jewish religious thought and the ancients astral cults. His theory of Jupiter as lower in hierarchy below Saturn, would demonstrate why rabinic and pre-rabinic sources had an astrological belief of a king-messiah represented by Jupiter<sup>34</sup>.

The mention of that astrological event can be found in The Book of Numbers 24:17: “a star will come out from Yaakov”<sup>35</sup>. This biblical oracle was understood as a prophecy and metaphor for King-Messiah . This belief belonged to a circle of Jewish Sages by generations and one of them called Rabbi Akkiva in the second century C.E was convinced that the awaited king-messiah would be Simeon Bar Kochba. That military man, led the revolt against the Roman Empire in the year 132 C.E but turned out to be unsuccessful<sup>36</sup>. Bar kochba means *son of the star*. The mystical oracle in Numbers 24:17, had a secret, theological meaning that was known to the unknown author of the Gospel of Matthew. The meaning of the star as symbol of governance related to the Isralites tribes, had a special background in the story of the Canaanite Egyptian ruler Joseph, found in the Book of Genesis 37:9

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<sup>29</sup> Mullen, E. T., Jr. (1980). "Preliminary Material". In The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill pp 175-76

<sup>30</sup> M.S Heiser (2004) The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature. Doctoral Thesis of Philosophy. University Of Wisconsin-Madison

<sup>31</sup> Clifford, R. J. (28 Jan. 2019). The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. pp 19-20

<sup>32</sup> Landsberger and Wilson, "The Fifth Tablet" pp 165-67, 11. 119-130

<sup>33</sup> Mathew 24:1-2

<sup>34</sup> Rosenberg, Roy A. 1972 The 'Star of the Messiah' Reconsidered. Biblica 53 (1) pp 105-109

<sup>35</sup> Jacobus, H. R. (2015). "17 Balaam's 'Star Oracle' (Num 24:15–19) in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Bar Kokhba". In The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill

<sup>36</sup> Yerushalmi Ta'anit, 4 68d; also Sanhedrin 93b in Yad HaRav Herzog manuscript

That meaning is confirmed by the Book of Daniel, related to guiding mankind, about teaching the path of the righteousness: “*and the prudent will shine with the bright of the firmament and the righteous ones, like many stars forevermore*”<sup>37</sup> But from the ancient beliefs the symbolism of the stars had a wider theological background, strongly tied to the religious idea of ancient kings taking place among their gods in the after-life, and in the heavenly realms, achieving the apotheosis. It is probable that ancient people believed that the rulers came from the skies and returned to them when they passed away. This is pretty much similar to the occidental christian belief about an after-life in heavenly places.

Apotheosis as a religious idea, is considered in anthropological studies<sup>38</sup> besides the thelemic tradition from the early 20th century, emphasizes this mystical idea among their followers.<sup>39</sup>

## **JOB: THE FACE OF SATAN AND THE GAZE OF MEDUSA**

Due to the nature of this paper-work, it would not be strange to associate astrological context to the religious ideas in the Book of Job. The sentence “*the day the children of God came unto Yahveh*” was actually a planetary alignment, where one of the most feared stars by the ancients was visible. A star known as The Eye of Medusa, belonging to the Perseus Constellation, which is also known under the name of *Algol* or *Ra's Al Ghul*.

However, the ancient Israelites and Jewish astrologers called it *Rosh HaSatan* or *The Head of Satan*. What this star represents, is the calamity striking those who were acknowledged as reputed princesses, kings, wise and righteous people. The Hebrew word Satan סָטָן means opposition and the translation for The Satan HaSatan סָטָן הַסָּטָן is The Ultimate Oppisor. This character of this figure is the embodiment of the calamity which is directed towards the oriental prince. There is an intertextuality according to the view of Gregorio del Olmo Lete, because it comes from previous traditions, from times of Ayyub, ruler of Ashtartu (Tel Ashtara, South of Damascus)<sup>40</sup>.

The Book of Job puts an emphasis on the belief that if a person sinned, and offended the supreme God – who also is the supreme judge and ruler of all – the calamity and ruin will strike their life strongly. *The righteous man wisely considers the house of the wicked, but God overthrows the wicked for their wickedness*<sup>41</sup>. That is the semitic thought of Job's friends. According to one of Job's friends, there is hope but he needs to go through the pain: . “*Behold, how happy is the man whom God corrects! Therefore do not despise the discipline of the*

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel 12:3 Self translation from a review of Charles Van der Pool 2003 The Apostolic Bible Polyglot based on Complutense Polyglot Bible and Lambert Bos 1709 Vetus Testamentum LXX

<sup>38</sup> Boak, Arthur E.R. "The Theoretical Basis of the Deification of Rulers in Antiquity", in: Classical Journal vol. 11, 1916, pp. 293–297

<sup>39</sup> Aleister Crowley (1905, Egypt) The Book of the Law Chapter 1:3

<sup>40</sup> G. Del Olmo Lete 2016. Job. Problem and solution. Universidad de Barcelona pp 42-44

<sup>41</sup> Proverbs 21:12

*Almighty, for He wounds, but He applies the bandage; He injures, but His hands also heal”*<sup>42</sup>. Job however doesn’t see himself as wicked or as someone who failed God. He did all what was expected from a worthy ruler and that is why his mourn is bitter. Even though his friends might be thinking he is receiving a necessary divine punishment, it is not in vain.

Why should this story have any kind of intertextuality? It should and it does, because from the point of view of the ancient religious way of thinking, it is important to explain the calamity inflicted onto the righteous and pious rulers. The same idea is found in some Mesopotamian tablets treating about the suffering of a king that was a subject of all kind of shames and illnesses (Ludlul bel Nemeqi from 1300 B.C.E) <sup>43</sup>. As Job, the Mesopotamian ruler Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan doesn’t know why such calamities happened to him.

The same principle but presented in a dramatic way, appears in Greek Mythology in the myth of Medusa. In a version of the Medusa’s myth, she was originally a beautiful maiden devoted to Athena. Even the goddess herself was jealous of her servant. Unfortunately, Poseidon raped Medusa in Athena’s temple. After this profanation of her temple, the goddess punished Medusa by transforming her beautiful hair into horrible snakes<sup>44 45</sup>. At some point, Medusa embodied the divine calamity occurring to virtuous religious people. She became a monster that reminds the bitter Job’s words: “from my abomination they flee from me” <sup>46</sup>.

The traditional sources evidently demonstrate that Medusa and Job came to terms with the pain and guilt that were put on them, even though they were considered extremely virtuous, gracious and righteous. In both cases, gods don’t feel guilty for the calamity they caused, and the humans have to accept that suffering with a supra-stoic mindset. From a non canonical perspective, we cannot avoid the conclusion that if humans dare to be perfect as their gods, they will be humiliated and put up for trials, as the perfection is only for the gods and demigods, otherwise it is considered selfishness and vanity. This is how religious views, consciously or not, treat the topic of perfection, setting boundaries between the divine virtues versus the search of virtues and perfection by humans, trying to follow the footsteps of their deities.

The whole myth of Medusa is not strictly related to the issue of the calamity, because eventually she became a Gorgon, a figure associated with fear and horror . The etymological background of gorgon means something *dreadful and grim* . Ovid provided more religious ideas associated with her symbolism. The head of Medusa in the myth of Perseus, is used to defeat his enemies and finally to be placed in Athena’s shield. This additional information is useful to

<sup>42</sup> Eliphaz answered. Job 5:17-19

<sup>43</sup> A. Seri, «Ludlul Bel nemeqi», *Estudios de Asia y África*, 105, XXXIII, 1. México, 1998, pp. 163 ss.

<sup>44</sup> Ovid (*Metamorphoses* Book 4<sup>th</sup> verses 775–893)

<sup>45</sup> R. Diver (2020, Birmingham) Tomboyish Wisdom Gods and Sexy Gorgons: The Evolution of Ovid’s Medusa: Rape Narrative in Contemporary Children’s Literature. New voices in classical reception studies, issue 13

<sup>46</sup> Job 30:10 Self translation from the Biblos Interlinear Bible

explain her apotropaic nature <sup>47</sup>. The idea of the horror is also attached to the psychological drama of Job as it is said by him: *For the thing I feared come upon me, and that which I was afraid come unto me* <sup>48</sup>. The themes of evil, horror, and suffering for those who fall into calamity, should not be analyzed under the scope of psychology as human emotions responding to human experiences, but also addressed by philosophical and theological discussions.

In theological discussions, evil has been perceived not only as negative human deeds that threaten the sense of life or social or natural order, but also as a cosmic influence matter. This idea is there at the beginning of the Book of Job. The name of the star Rosh HaSatan or Algol is not random, since the Hebrew word *rosh* שָׁׁרֶשׁ, which is used to designate *principal or beginning* in the same way that the Aleph, is at the head of all the aleph-bet and its pictogram is the head of an Ox. Satan as a cosmic principle can be placed in a variety of philosophical discussions. In Biblical literature, the legend of King David killing Goliath and beheading his head is a powerful image of triumph in the same way that the legend of Perseus holding the head of Medusa in his hand is.

The head as a symbol of the divine powers, first settlers or even important rulers, is found in several cultures: the Olmec heads in Veracruz, Mexico, those of the Island of Rapa Nui in Chile or those of Mount Nemrut in Turkey. The Medusa's head that once possessed beautiful hair and face, symbols of beauty, later became the most evil head among the gorgons. That monstrous head, left those who were exposed to such horror petrified. The symbolism of the head as a principle of power, in the Book of Genesis, is found as an oracle against the head of the serpent's offspring.

Rosh HaSatan was also known as Ra's Al Ghul or The Head of the Ghoul, an evil devourer demon-monster. This constellation was imagined as a gigantic monster that caught its victims on its hands to devour them. Another associated name for the constellation of Perseus was Cacodaemon, which comes from the greek concept of *kako-daimon* which translates: *evil spirit* <sup>49</sup>. The word *Kako* comes from the proto-Indo European *kakka*, which translates as *defecate* <sup>50 51</sup>. *Kakos* as an adjective can be understood as a measure of quality: bad, worthless, useless, measure of appearance: ugly, hideous, of circumstances: injurious, wretched, unhappy or describing the character as: low, mean, vile, evil. Algol was observed as a fainting star from ancient times <sup>52</sup>. This rareness, fed the myth of Seth against Horus. The god Seth was associated

<sup>47</sup> Glennon, Madeleine. "Medusa in Ancient Greek Art." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/medu/hd\\_medu.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/medu/hd_medu.htm) (March 2017)

<sup>48</sup> Job 3:25 Self translation from the Biblos Interlinear Bible

<sup>49</sup> Jewell, William. The Golden Cabinet of True Treasure. London: John Crosley, 1612. Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A04486.0001.001>

<sup>50</sup> Liddell & Scott (1940) A Greek–English Lexicon, Oxford: Clarendon Press

<sup>51</sup> Julius Pokorny (Austria,1959) Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch

<sup>52</sup> Clifford J. Cunningham (2020) Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage, 23(2), 231–256 .'DARK STARS' AND A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE ANCIENT GREEK STELLAR MAGNITUDE SYSTEM pp 240-251

with both Algol and the Moon. All those negatives beliefs around Algol created the first calendar of lucky and unlucky days<sup>53</sup> <sup>54</sup>. Now it is known that Algol is a multiple-star system with at least two confirmed stellar components. Watching from the Earth, the Alpha Persei and Beta Persei form an eclipsing binary shine<sup>55</sup>.

From the perspective of astrologers, Algol is considered a fixed star<sup>56</sup> and its astrological features leave a clear idea about why Job's fate, as is attested in the following comment in an astrology book from earlier 20<sup>th</sup> Century “*Influence: Of nature of Saturn and Jupiter. It causes misfortune, violence, decapitation, hanging and mob violence, and gives a dogged and violent nature that causes death to the native or others. It is the MOST EVIL STAR. Related with the moon, violent death and extreme sickness will come*”<sup>57</sup>. Given this example that represents what is known about its influence and aligned with Saturn and Jupiters, Job's misfortunes can be understood as a divine decree that affected his life in an unexpected way.

From astrology, not only arises the mathematics on which the civilized world is based, but also the religions and myths that are among us from ancient times. The notion of a cosmic evil was as real as the tragedies and calamities in human experiences can not be denied. Satan or HaSatan embodied for ancient Isralites all kinds of calamities and not only demonic possessions or sins, even though modern Satanists and Christians probably won't be agreed with.

The subject of Satan as a character that is built from the use of the Hebrew verb *lesatan* לְשַׁת and simply translates *oppose or hinder*<sup>58</sup> is changed from a literary figure to a universal archetype of the adversity or challenges that allow humankind to improve their chances of survival and evolution, because a variety of disasters and calamities can be controlled.

Biblical texts show us that in many of their stories, that any person can be a kind of a Satan as an obstacle or adversity. The same way Jesus faced the opposition as any of us, even saying to his friend and disciple Peter, “get behind me Satan!”

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<sup>53</sup> Porceddu, Sebastian, Jetsu, Lauri, Markkanen, Tapio, Lyytinen, Joonas, Kajatkari, Perttu, Lehtinen, Jyri and Toivari-Viitala, Jaana. "Algol as Horus in the Cairo Calendar: The Possible Means and the Motives of the Observations" Open Astronomy, vol. 27, no. 1, 2018, pp. 232-263.

<sup>54</sup> Jetsu L, Porceddu S. Shifting Milestones of Natural Sciences: The Ancient Egyptian Discovery of Algol's Period Confirmed. PLoS One. 2015 Dec.

<sup>55</sup> Jetsu, L. (2021). "Say Hello to Algol's New Companion Candidates". The Astrophysical Journal. 920 (2): 137

<sup>56</sup> Claudius Ptolomeus Almagest (100-1700 A.D) Vol 1 Fixed Stars

<sup>57</sup> Robson Vivian E. (1923) .The Fixed Stars And Constellations In Astrology pp 123-24

<sup>58</sup> According is used in Numbers 22:22

## RAPHA-EL: ANGEL OF GOD AND GOD.

This epithet is puzzling when it does not appear to be related with the Christian or Jewish theology. Nor is it strange, when we got to know others, similar to El-Elyon. Although his only appearance is in the Septuaginta, specifically in the book of Tobit (included in the majority of the catholic bibles), his manifestation is abundant in the cultures with the judeo-christian baggage.

This divine name is attested as far back as 1350 B.C.E in the series of Amarna Letter, in one letter sent by Pabi (Pabu), Prince of Lachish to Pharaoh Akhenaten. It is written: "Now have I sent you Rapha-el.(Raphi-el)" It is shortly described as someone that "*will bring intelligence concerning the matter*" <sup>59</sup>Egyptian gods with the same attributes could be Thot from Khemenu but also Khonsu from Thebes, the one who belonged to the triad (Mut-Amun-Khonsu). Eventually, both initially lunar deities became Hermes Trismegistus for the Greeks but this time, this god turns out to be the representation of Mercury. Some scholars think his equivalent Mesopotamian God was Ninurta. The following is written in the Babylonian Astronomical Compendium MULAPIN: *Mercury whose name is Ninurta travels the path the moon travels.* And later: *Mercury, whose name is Ninurta, becomes visible within a month and disappears...*<sup>60</sup> Among the scholars there is no unified position about the Nature of this God, it is likely another version of Nergal. Also, he is associated with the Amorite god Hadad-Ishkur.

What can be concluded about Rapha-EL is that he represents the knowledge to find successful solutions that grant healing and get rid of evil spirits. In the Book of Tobit, he manifests himself in a human form but from the view of the ancient traditions, every god is able to do the same. All that is needed, is to look up the ancient myths and we will find several examples.

## ONTOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

Mankind has always been preoccupied with understanding of the nature of existence and being. One way to attempt to make sense of the universe is through the study of mythology. A mythological ontological view <sup>61</sup> shed light at the study of existence and beings through the lens of the interpretations of ancient traditions understood as sources of religious ideas coming from astrological views. Those traditions and their myths attempt to spiritualize the universe and secularize heaven in order to create systems of understanding. A mythological ontological view is based on some principles of mythology that could not be disputed at least not openly in ancient times. They were the basis of the canonical religions of the ancient states.These principles include the idea that gods are holy factors manifested in the world's reality.

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<sup>59</sup> Robert William Rogers, ed., Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament (New York: Eaton & Mains; Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, 1912), pp. 268-279.

<sup>60</sup> Hunger, Hermann; Steele, John (2018). The Babylonian Astronomical Compendium MUL.APIN

<sup>61</sup> Dehghan zade, S. (2015). The Sacred Ontology in Myths. *Religious Research*, 3(5), 99-114.

Additionally, the world is seen from an animistic view of being alive. Under the scope of Animism, it is important to address that the other divine powers, understood as a divine council for all ancient peoples, became angels and demons for the Jewish nation and later for all the Christians. The Angels and Demons of the Qabbalah are considered cosmic forces as the same for Christians. These archetypes of cosmical influences, comes from an animistic worldview, believed or not, denied or not.

There is also an inherent connection between humans and the universe through the partnership of the numinous. The conformity and identity of the universe and heaven are meaningful. Human beings were provided with divine origins, being some kind of manifestation of the numinous. For mankind, the relations with all beings of all metaphysical ranks have been important, but the lack of a clear distinction between subjective and objective realities, has brought shadows in the way that mankind can align themselves with the sense of the sacred and their place in the world. Universe and human beings are considered sacred and both have a sense of reality. In contrast, anything that is profane is considered a non-sense. This idea highlights the importance of understanding the world through a spiritual lens in order to make sense of existence and being.

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